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ABSTRACT

This document is the tenth in a series of 12 early childhood program descriptions compiled by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. The program described here is the Appalachia Preschool Education Program developed by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory. The Appalachia Preschool Program is a demonstration project designed to provide preschool education for children from rural Appalachia. The program is oriented to the home rather than to a central nursery school, because the sparse population is scattered over a large area with poor access roads. The program consists of three major components: a television program, a home visitor program, and a mobile classroom program. Included in the program description are brief outlines of: (1) goals and objectives, (2) content and materials, (3) classroom activities, (4) parent involvement, (5) professional and paraprofessional training, (6) administrative requirements and costs, (7) program development and evaluation, and (8) program history and present (1971) status. (JMB)

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Program Summary

Appalachia Preschool Education Program

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The California State Board of Education
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The Regents of the University of Nevada
The Nevada State Board of Education
The Board of Regents of the University of Utah
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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Appalachia Preschool Program is a demonstration project designed to provide for children from rural Appalachia a preschool education which they would not otherwise receive. In a region which has a sparse population scattered over a large area with poor access roads, the traditional nursery schoolhouse concept is geographically and financially unfeasible.

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, one of the regional laboratories funded by the U.S. Office of Education, has proposed and developed a home-oriented preschool program as an alternative approach to prepare 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds for first grade. The program focuses on the development of language, cognitive, motor, and orienting and attending skills.

CONTENT AND MATERIALS

The home-oriented program consists of three major components: a television program, a home visitor program, and a mobile classroom program. The television program, called Around the Bend, consists of 150 half-hour lessons which are broadcast over a local TV station on a weekly basis. Patty, the on-camera teacher, explores places, such as a library, which rural children seldom have a chance to see, through songs, games, art work, and puppets. She teaches number skills, color and size, discrimination, and the alphabet. Each broadcast is centered around the development of skills.

The television program is supplemented by a home visitor program. Eight trained home visitors visit about 30 homes a week, spending about 30 to 45 minutes at each home. Each home visitor brings materials such as books, television lesson. The home visitor tutors and encourages parents to take part in learning activities.

The third major component of the program is a mobile classroom. The mobile classroom, staffed by a teacher and an aide, is a large van with an 8' by 11' "classroom." It is heated, air-conditioned, carpeted, and has a water supply and a chemical toilet. It contains child-size furniture, audiovisual equipment, a cooking area, a chalk board, a bulletin board, cabinet space, books, and an assortment of manipulative toys. The van makes nine

stops a week. At each stop it provides two hours of instruction for 15 children who live within a two-mile radius. The activities in the mobile classroom are planned to relate to the skills taught on the TV program and home visitor program. One distinctive feature of the mobile classroom program is that it provides children with social contacts with other children.

Materials used in all these three programs include common commercially available books, puzzles, manipulative toys, and other home-made or teacher-made items.

PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING

The project staff is divided into two teams: the curriculum team and the field team. The curriculum team is responsible for the development of all curriculum materials for use by the TV teacher, the home visitor, and the mobile classroom teacher. The field team consists of the van teacher, her aide, a field team leader, an instructional monitor, and eight paraprofessional home visitors. The field team members are given a three-week preservice training by the project staff at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory. It involves an introduction to the study of child development, use of materials appropriate for preschool children, sensitivity training, and practice in the use of interview techniques. Training materials are available from the Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND COST

Start-up cost to purchase a fully-equipped mobile classroom is $22,000. The van will be able to service up to 160 children per year. TV lessons and training materials are available from the developer on loan and at no cost to school districts interested in implementing the program. The developers estimate that the annual cost to implement this program for all 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in the state of West Virginia will amount to about $235 per child, as compared a cost of $496 per child per year if the traditional schoolhouse concept is implemented.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

Since 1968, the program has reached 450 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in rural Appalachia. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, a battery of tests has been used, including the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test,

the Forstig Visual Perception Test, the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, and the Appalachia Preschool Test, developed by the project staff to measure objectives of the program. The 1969-70 test data showed some significant differences on the Appalachia Preschool Test between the experimental groups and the controls. Other significant differences were shown primarily for the 3-year-old girl subgroup. The developers felt that these results were encouraging enough to continue development of the program for a third year (1970-71).

An attempt was also made to measure social learning in the mobile classroom by using an interaction analysis technique devised by the project staff. The technique involved observing and recording social behavior along 28 social skill indicators, such as "requests assistance," "initiates antagonistic action." The results showed that the group with mobile classroom exposure tended to be less withdrawn than groups without the mobile classroom experience. The developers felt that certain social skills were related to the mobile classroom experiences.

Another evaluation study, comparing achievement of regular kindergarten graduates and graduates from the Appalachia model, is under way. Results from this comparative study are unavailable at the present time (November 1971).

PROGRAM HISTORY AND PRESENT DEVELOPMENT

The Appalachia Preschool Program is a three-year demonstration project which began during the 1968-1969 school year. To the present time, 450 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in rural Appalachia have been enrolled in the home-oriented program. The project hopes to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach and to implement the program for the entire 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old population in the state of West Virginia.